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DOWNTOWN
SAINT PAUL

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R.M.

St. Paul Labor History Map

Labor Unions have played an important role in St. Paul's history and development. The research, map, and text for this tour was created by Workday Minnesota, a partnership between the Labor Education Service, at the University of Minnesota, and the Minnesota AFL-CIO. Please visit their site at:

http://www.workdayminnesota.org/untold_stories

Please note: Most residences listed here are private homes. Anyone viewing them should respect that.

"" Denotes building no longer exists.

- 1. Harvester Bldg, University and Hwy 280** Originally built in 1915 to manufacture the Overland automobile, it later was owned by International Harvester and now is known as the Court International Building.
- 2. Odd Fellows Hall, Raymond and Hampden Aves.** "Odd fellows" do odd jobs — that is, they are day laborers. This fraternal organization, the Independent Order of Odd Fellows, had many working class members in the 19th century. Many workers belonged to fraternal organizations for social reasons and because the organizations offered insurance policies that provided some protection against injury, ill health and old age before Social Security and other benefits were won in the 1930s. Some fraternal organizations were ethnically based.
- 3. Minnesota Transfer Railroad (view from Raymond Avenue bridge, just before Energy Park Drive, looking southeast).** Now called "Minnesota Commercial Railway" after the union was eliminated there in the 1980s. (Also, see #7).
- 4. Original location of Quality Tool Co., 2135 Energy Park Dr. (near Raymond).** Site of first strike by Southeast Asian workers, members of International Union of Electronic Workers (IUE) Local 1140, in 1989-90. Despite solidarity among the workers, strike was lost.
- 5. University of Minnesota.** The American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) won historic elections in the early 1990s to represent University clerical and technical workers.
- 6. State Fair Grounds.** For a number of years in the early 20th century, Minneapolis and St. Paul unions paraded to the Fair Grounds on Labor Day, where they met for a joint celebration.
- 7. 612 N. Fairview.** Home of American Railway Union activist William F. Burns in 1894. Burns was a switchman at the Minnesota Transfer Railroad in the Midway area and took part in the 1894 Pullman strike. Later in 1894 he wrote a 300-page book on the strike, published by McGill Printing Co.
- 8. William Mahoney home, 1852 Dayton.** Outspoken in his belief that unions needed to be politically active, Mahoney was responsible in large part for the formation of the Farmer-Labor Party. He served as president of the St. Paul Trades and Labor Assembly and as editor of the Union Advocate from 1920 until 1932, when he was elected Mayor of St. Paul.
- 9. Casville Bullard home, 1282 Folsom St. (north of Wheelock Parkway).** Home to one of the few African-American craftsmen known to have worked in the unionized building trades in St. Paul in the early 20th century. Bullard, a longtime member of Bricklayers Local 1, helped build the state Capitol, St. Paul Cathedral, City Hall, Foshay Tower and many other major structures. He built this house himself.
- 10. Snelling Avenue Shops, Snelling Ave. and Interstate 94.** The last remaining building, currently used as a bus barn, was built in 1906 as an erecting shop for the Twin Cities Rapid Transit Company, which operated the streetcar system. The area now taken up by Midway Shopping Center was also occupied by the yards and buildings of the company. Streetcar workers had explosive strikes in 1889, 1917 and 1934 before establishing a stable, long-lasting union in the industry. (Slated to be torn down).
- 11. Ford Assembly plant, corner of Ford Parkway and Mississippi Blvd.** Ford vehicles built here since 1923. Unionized since the 1940s.
- 12. United Auto Workers hall, 2191 Ford Parkway.** Headquarters for 2,000 autoworkers, this hall was the staging area in 1985-86 for many solidarity activities in support of striking Hormel workers in Austin, Minnesota.

13. Como Shops (Energy Park Dr. west of Lexington). Now known as Bandana Square, this was the location of the Northern Pacific Railroad's major St. Paul shops.

14. Fredrick Ferguson house, 985 Kilburn. Fred Ferguson joined the Knights of Labor in Brainerd and was a machinist at the Northern Pacific shops there. Machinists were organized into the Knights of Labor 1887-1888 before affiliating in 1890 with the newly formed Minnesota State Federation of Labor. Ferguson also was president of a local of the American Railway Union in St. Paul in 1894. The ARU, led by Eugene V. Debs, organized rail workers across the country and was at the forefront of the industrial union movement. The union won a huge victory in the Great Northern strike of 1894, but was smashed when federal troops were sent in to crush the Pullman strike later that year. Ferguson continued his union activism as longtime president of Machinists Lodge 112.

15. Lexington Baseball Park, Lexington and University Aves. Opened in 1897 by Charles Comiskey, the park was the site that spring of disputes with the St. Paul Trades and Labor Assembly over union cigars, musicians and advertising. After a brief boycott, Comiskey agreed to labor's demands. Stadium grandstand walls are still standing in the southwest corner of the area, occupied by a shopping center since the park was torn down in the 1950s.*

16. Central High School, 275 N. Lexington Parkway. One of many sites of picketing by the teachers union during the historic 1946 strike, first ever by a teachers union in the United States.

17. Wheels Club, St. Albans and Concordia Aves. A longtime gathering place for black rail workers, including members of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters.

18. Lendway's Restaurant, Dale St. and University Ave. This popular working class bar and restaurant has been a union house from its inception. Established in the 1930s, it was patronized heavily by workers from the Great Northern Railroad's now demolished Dale Street shops.

19. Charles James home, 419 Sherburne, (near Western). Charles E. James, member of a pioneer St. Paul African-American family and a national leader of the Boot and Shoe Workers Union, was living in this house in 1902, when he was elected to the first of three terms as president of the St. Paul Trades and Labor Assembly.

20. W. W. Erwin home, 481 Iglehart. William Wallis Erwin, "The Tall Pine," was a celebrated criminal defense lawyer and a hero of the labor movement. The St. Paul Trades and Labor Assembly sent Erwin to Pittsburgh in 1892, where he successfully defended leaders of the great strike against Andrew Carnegie's Homestead Steel Works who were charged with murder. Erwin went to Chicago in July 1894 to represent Eugene Debs and other leaders of the Pullman strike. He was a frequent speaker at labor events.*

21. Frank Boyd Park, Selby and Virginia Sts. Dedicated to the memory of this outstanding leader of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters Union and the St. Paul African-American community. See bust of Boyd and plaque describing his life at southwest corner of Park: "He was a fighter for his people, his union and his class."

22. Henry Orme Brass & Iron Works, 626 Armstrong. The Molders Union, one of the earliest in St. Paul, organized workers here in the 19th century.

23. Butternut St. (off Shepard Road.) These two blocks of small houses were built for brewery workers. There were at one time six breweries in the West Seventh Street area. Nearby is the Banholzer mansion, 681 Butternut Ave., home of William Banholzer, who owned the nearby North Mississippi Brewery. The St. Paul Trades and Labor Assembly held early Labor Day picnics at Banholzer Park near Drake and Stewart Streets just off West Seventh and Randolph.

24. Minnesota Brewing Company, 882 W. 7th St. Originally the Stahlmann Brewery, this was the Schmidt Brewing Co. until the 1980s when it closed in a leveraged buyout. It reopened in the early 1990s under new ownership. Still unionized today, workers were originally organized by the Brewery Workers Union. The predominantly German Brewery Workers were one of two industrial unions in the early AFL. (The United Mine Workers were the other). Proudly socialist, they put the slogan, "Workers of the World Unite" at the top of their union letterhead. Christopher Stahlmann's mansion is on the other side of the street.

- 25. Omaha Railroad Shops, Randolph and Duke Sts.** Over 1,000 shop workers were employed here by the Chicago, St. Paul, Minneapolis and Omaha Railroad. Part of original roundhouse (torn down in 1998) is still standing, now used as a warehouse. The other buildings were demolished long ago. This was one of the sites of the 1922 shopcraft strike.
- 26. CSPA hall. (Czechoslovak Protective Society), 383 Michigan St. (at West 7th).** Built to house this fraternal organization of Czechoslovaks. Czech community is located in this area.
- 27. Harriet Island, opposite downtown on the south bank of the Mississippi River, near the Wabasha Bridge.** The site of Labor Day picnics sponsored by the Trades and Labor Assembly. In the early part of this century it was the site of the Harriet Island public baths, created mostly through the untiring efforts of St. Paul Commissioner of Health Dr. Justus Ohage, who sought to improve the health of poor and working people before indoor plumbing was widely available. He was greatly admired by the labor movement here.
- 28. Headquarters of Plastics, Inc., 224 Ryan Ave.** Site of a 1979 strike that turned bloody. Machinists Lodge 459 member Don Pilla, among a group of workers picketing the company's non-union plant in Coon Rapids, was killed after a truck plowed through the picketline. His death led to landmark state legislation requiring all vehicles to stop before attempting to pass through a picketline. Pilla has been memorialized through an annual scholarship offered by the Minnesota AFL-CIO.
- 29. Selby Tunnel, foot of Summit Ave.** Built for streetcars early this century; closed since the 1950s. To get there go south on Kellogg Blvd. from John Ireland Blvd., turn right at College Ave. (just before 35E ramp) and go one block to end of street.
- 30. Labor & Professional Centre, 411 Main St.** Current home of the St. Paul Trades and Labor Assembly and some local unions. Successor to numerous other labor buildings no longer standing.
- 31. Landmark Building, former Federal Building, on Rice Park.** U.S. District Court was the site of the creation of many anti-labor injunctions: Judge Walter Sanborn issued an injunction against the American Railway Union strike of the Great Northern Railroad in 1894. (A resolution for his impeachment was introduced in Congress as a result.) Later anti-strike injunctions were issued from this 1903 building in 1934 (Strutwear Knitting strike) and 1959 (Wilson strike in Albert Lea by United Packinghouse Workers Union) by a panel of federal judges including John Sanborn and Edward Devitt.
- 32. Rice Park.** Thousands of workers gathered here for the funeral procession of Charles Luth, killed during the Pullman strike in 1894. St. Paul Public Works Commissioner Oscar Keller was indicted by a Ramsey County Grand jury for a "disloyal" speech here supporting workers during the 1917 streetcar strike.
- 33. 309 Wabasha St.** Known as "Assembly Halls," this was headquarters for the St. Paul Trades & Labor Assembly from 1893 to 1917. It was also the headquarters for the American Railway Union. Eugene V. Debs spoke here and at other sites in St. Paul during the Great Northern rail strike of 1894.*
- 34. Wabasha St. Bridge.** Construction of the original bridge in the 1850s was the site of one of the first strikes by construction workers in St. Paul history.
- 35. Former site of American Hoist & Derrick Co., Plato Blvd. and Robert St.** "The Hoist," as it was known, became one of the worst examples of runaway, union-busting companies during the 1980s. Management attempted to use federal funds to move the entire operations to a non-union plant in South Carolina. The labor movement fought back. Under the leadership of Congressman Bruce Vento, a former delegate to the Trades & Labor Assembly, the federal money was returned to help the hundreds of workers who lost their jobs after the company decided to shut down.*
- 36. "Broad-Axe" office, 123 S. Wabasha.** Published for nearly two decades by A.L. Graves, the Broad-Axe was a turn-of-the-century Populist newspaper. Published weekly on St. Paul's West Side, it supported the Pullman strikers and other labor causes. The slogan on its masthead was: "Hew to the Line — Let the Chips Fall Where They May."*

37. St. Paul's West Side. The heart of St. Paul's Latino neighborhood has been the scene of demonstrations in support of the United Farm Workers and other labor causes. The area along Concord St. also is filled with colorful murals illustrating Indian and Mexican history.

38. South St. Paul Packinghouse District (Concord and John E. Carroll Blvd.) At one time nearly 10,000 meatpacking workers in this area were employed by the Union Stockyards and the Swift, Armour and Cudahy Companies. Swift closed in 1969 and Armour in 1979. South St. Paul packinghouse workers participated in national strikes in 1904, 1921 and 1948. The Minnesota National Guard was called out in 1921 and 1948 when mass picketing closed the plants. Not until the 1940s did the workers succeed in bringing all the major packers under union contract. The last meatpacking strike was in 1984 by UFCW Local 4-P at the Iowa Pork Company, now closed. The area also includes ethnic halls such as Croatian Hall, 445-2nd Av So. Packinghouse workers were drawn heavily from immigrants from the former Yugoslavia. The Croatian Fraternal Union was a secular, predominantly leftist organization of Croatian-American workers.

39. Lowertown (area around Mears Park and the Farmers Market). This downtown district was a center for textile production and garment workers unions earlier this century.

40. 364 Wall St. (formerly Rosabel St.) Site of the Minnesota House, a boarding house. Charles Luth, a switchman, was murdered here by Charles Leonard, chief clerk to the superintendent of the Omaha Railroad on July 14, 1894. Leonard was registering scabs at the hotel when Luth objected. A fight ensued and Leonard shot Luth. After trial Leonard was found not guilty. Funeral procession of 3,000 to Oakland Cemetery was led by the Knights of Pythias band, a fraternal lodge to which Luth belonged.

41. Gotzian Shoe Co., Fifth and Wacouta. This was the location of the Gotzian and Minnesota Shoe Companies. Knights of Labor Local Assembly No. 2832 organized shoe workers at the Minnesota Shoe Company in the 1880s. African-American labor leader Charles James, a founder of the Boot and Shoe Workers Union in the Twin Cities, worked for the Minnesota Shoe Co. as a skilled leather cutter in the 1890s. Napoleon Savard, a member of the Knights of Labor and a founder of the St. Paul Trades and Labor Assembly, also worked for the company somewhat earlier.

42. E. 7th Street between Broadway and Sibley Sts. (south side). These five buildings are nearly the last surviving examples downtown of the type of relatively modest commercial buildings in which the early labor movement met. In most cases fraternal lodges and labor organizations met in halls in the upper floors of buildings like these in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

43. 371 Jackson (near 7th St.) Although the building has long since been demolished, this was the meeting place for the Knights of Labor, for the Masons' African-American Pioneer Lodge, and the location of the meeting that founded the St. Paul Trades and Labor Assembly in 1882.*

44. Former Emporium and Golden Rule buildings, 7th St. E. and Robert St. These huge department stores once beckoned shoppers to downtown St. Paul. They were gradually closed with the advent of suburban shopping malls. The Retail Clerks union, now part of the United Food & Commercial Workers, represented workers at the stores.

45. Foot-Schulze Shoe Co., Robert St. at Tenth. This massive, five-story industrial building was erected in 1916 when the company's original plant at 3rd and Wacouta was torn down to make way for the Union Depot. Close to 1,000 workers worked here at its peak. The Boot and Shoe Workers Union struggled to maintain a presence until the company closed and moved sometime before World War II.

46. Eva McDonald Valesh home, 796 Jackson Street. Eva was a celebrated labor agitator and journalist in the Twin Cities in the 1880s. Her husband, Frank Valesh, a Czech-born cigarmaker, was the first president of the Minnesota State Federation of Labor.*

47. State Capitol grounds. Site of many protests and demonstrations by labor and its allies. Angry farmers sat down and occupied the legislative chambers in the 1930s. St. Paul's largest labor demonstration occurred here in

1989 as 11,000 workers rallied against anti-union construction at the Boise-Cascade plant in International Falls. Unions have lobbied for scores of laws, from minimum wage to workplace safety, that help all workers. Through the efforts of the labor movement, local and state public employees won collective bargaining rights in 1973.

48. Floyd Olson statue, Wabasha St. and Constitution Blvd. (just south and west of Capitol). Minnesota Farmer-Labor Governor Floyd B. Olson was elected in 1930 and served until his death in 1936. The Farmer-Labor party, an independent political movement of unions and farm organizations, existed from 1918 until 1944. Note that while statues of Democratic Governor John Johnson and Republican Senator Knute Nelson are prominently displayed just south of the Capitol Building, Olson is relegated to a relatively obscure location.

49. Jackson St. Railroad Shops, Jackson and Pennsylvania Sts. The shops were originally built by James J. Hill's St Paul and Manitoba Railroad. In 1893 it became the Great Northern. Two buildings remain from the original complex, built of grey Platteville limestone. Workers here participated in the 1894 and 1922 railroad strikes.

50. Neighborhood around the Jackson St. Railroad Shops. Streets near Jackson St. Shops were named after stations on the Manitoba Railway. They include Atwater, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Wayzata and Litchfield. This area has many so-called "mechanic's cottages," small homes built to house workers in the Jackson St. railroad shops. Historic buildings in the area include: 820 Park. A good example of a "mechanic's cottage;" Benjamin Stevens home, 1031 Park. Stevens was one of a number of African-American stone masons who were brought from Georgia to cut the marble for the construction of the State Capitol Building. Shortly after a 1992 Union Advocate article about the house, it was torn down by the Public Works Department. Knights of Labor Local Assembly No. 4031, Park and Sycamore Sts. The building, torn down in the 1940s, was one of two K of L buildings in St Paul in the 1880s. 61 Manitoba. In 1893 home to H.F. Connor, master of Brotherhood of Railway Trainmen. Ackermann Bros saloon, 780 N. Jackson (corner Sycamore St.) Built in 1886, the saloon was patronized by workers from the Jackson Street Shops.

51. Union Brass, Mackubin and Lawson. Site of strikes in the 1930s and 1980s.

52. Engine Co. No. 22, 293 W. Front Street, (near Western). For many decades, black firefighters were segregated into one fire company. This was its headquarters.

53. Henry Crepeau home, 203 W. Front Ave. In 1920 Crepeau, a member of the Trades and Labor Assembly Executive Board and a leader of Pressmen's Local 29, was appointed Chief of Police after labor took several seats on the City Council. The St. Paul Pioneer Press and businessmen raised a storm of protest after Crepeau called scabs "dirty rats" and refused to allow police to break up picket lines. Crepeau was removed from office by Mayor Larry Hodgson, a former newspaper columnist. In 1923 Crepeau and fellow unionist Frank Pampusch bought the Ramaley Printing Co.*

54. Joseph Priferl home, 1094 Woodbridge St. Elected to his first union office at age 15, Priferl was a leader of the Furrier's Union and later the Teamsters. Born in the Tyrol region of Austria in 1905, he moved to St. Paul soon afterwards. He represented the Rice St. area in the Legislature for 34 years, retiring in 1972. He died in 1997.

55. Emil Reinecke home, 1229 Rice St. Reinecke, a cigarmaker who lived here in the 1890s, was secretary of Washington Lodge No. 1 of the Sons of Hermann, a German fraternal lodge. The Cigar Makers issued the call to other unions in 1882 to form the St. Paul Trades and Labor Assembly.

56. 416 Mount Ida St. (Railroad Island area). In 1904, home of Thomas Robinson, Secretary of Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers Division 369, the "Oriental Lodge," Omaha Railroad.

57. 3M plant, Seventh and Arcade Sts. Location of original 3M plant in St. Paul. Nearly 5,000 workers here were organized into the Gas and Coke Workers Union (CIO) during the 1940s, now the Paper, Allied-Industrial, Chemical & Energy Workers union. Some 15 workers were killed in an industrial explosion here in the 1950s.

58. Foresters Hall, 876 Payne Ave. (near Wells St.) Rail workers met here in the meeting halls of the

Independent Order of Foresters during the 1894 Pullman strike. This is the only building known to still exist in St. Paul which was used by the labor movement in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

59. Polish American Club, 1003 Arcade St. (near Case St.) Current meeting place of PACE Local 7-75 (3M employees) and social center for Polish Americans.

60. Whirlpool (Arcade St. north of Minnehaha). Formerly the Seeger Refrigerator Co. A strike at Seeger's in 1940 was the biggest in the city since the 1922 railroad strike, according to St. Paul papers. Organized by Refrigerator Workers Local 20459, AFL, later the Teamsters Union. When the plant closed in the 1980s some 900 union workers lost their jobs.*

61. Mounds Park. This area has been occupied by organized human society for many centuries. This is the earliest known physical structure built by the creative and productive human beings who preceded us.

62. St. Paul Harvester Works, Hazel and Mechanic Sts. (two blocks north of Case on Hazel). Built in 1875 to manufacture agricultural machinery. Now part of a huge 3M complex alongside more modern buildings. Mechanic St. originally had houses built for the Works employees, but none remain. Some examples of early workers' houses are nearby. See 1867 Ames St. and 1881 and 1886 Magnolia St., for example. For the best view of the old factory buildings, continue north on Hazel onto the walkbridge over the railroad tracks and look south-east. You are standing on the original streetcar right-of-way which ran along Hazel and bridged the Omaha Railroad's double main line.

63. St. John's Cemetery (Little Canada Road 1.2 miles east of Centerville Road). Located near an historic center of Ramsey County's Metis people, the cemetery has an informative marker commemorating this community of French and Native American ancestry. The French came here from Canada – hence “Little Canada” – and became part of the Native American settlement at what is now called Savage Lake. Slandered in most conventional Minnesota history as low-life “half-breeds” like “Pig's Eye” Parrant, the Metis (French for “mixed”) created stable communities generations before the Yankee New Englanders arrived in the 1840s. Their numerous descendants are a living link to the original indigenous people of this area. Centerville Road itself, originally a Native American ricing trail, leads directly to another historic Metis cemetery at St. Genevieve parish in Centerville. An uncle of the legendary Canadian Metis leader Louis Reil lived in St. Paul in the 1880s, where he worked as a stonecutter. The stonecutters had one of the first unions in St. Paul. Nearby is Gervais Grist Mill, one block east of St. John's on Little Canada Road and one block north on Noel St. This was the first commercial grist mill in Minnesota, opened in 1844.

64. Ramaley Pavilion, near the intersection of Highway 61 and Old White Bear Ave. in White Bear Lake. Although long since torn down, this huge pavilion, located on the small bay on the west shore of the lake, was the site of Minnesota's first Labor Day celebration. Trains from St. Paul, Minneapolis and Stillwater brought thousands of unionists here on the first Monday in September, 1885. The Havenor Funeral Home, located directly across the Highway at 4531 Lincoln Ave, was then a hotel run by the Ramaley's for the summer tourist trade.*

65. Chatauqua Park, Highway 244 and Stillwater Road, Mahtomedi. Known as “Triangle Park” today. This was a Minnesota location for the famous 19th century summer educational and cultural festivals known as “Chatauquas.” In 1887, former Mississippi Senator Blanche Bruce, an African-American elected to office during the Reconstruction era, spoke here on “The Race Problem.”

66. Wildwood Amusement Park, Highway 244 and Old Wildwood Road. Constructed by the Twin Cities Rapid Transit Company in the late 19th century at the end of their streetcar line, the company transported thousands of working people to affordable summer fun. Across the lake were (and are) the summer mansions of St. Paul's merchants, bankers and capitalists.*